

13/6.

Depot Town Rag

Volume 13, Number 6 "All the news in one block in one month."

100% FREE Rag content
JUNE 1990

Hysterical preservation
Locusts

Nine Ball Champ
Historic Hustles

Frog Island specials
Frog Island line-up

... and other strictly local stuff

A Publication of the DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

On the sidewalks of old Depot Town

The weatherman may not be able to make up his mind, but Depot Towners have: summer is here! Umbrella tables have appeared in front of many local eateries and Frog Island window themes were in place for the Gus Macker basketball weekend. For the first time in recent history, color-coordinated flowers adorned the streetside beds and bunkers up and down East Cross and North River Streets. The new locust trees were still sprouting and were welcomed by happy faces up and down the busiest street in town.

"Why does everyone stand in the street down in Depot Town?" one basketballer was heard to ask in May. Maybe it's because the street is such a pleasant place. Maybe it isn't another chicken joke, after all!

Friends and neighbors continue to add to the quality of life in this old commercial district. And the best part is, all you have to do to be a part of it is get out and start meeting people on the sidewalks. Let's take a walk. . .



DEPOT PEOPLE: Professor Malarkey strides again

Showing up, as usual, for the Depot Town Antique Engine Club's Memorial Day Swap Meet, Professor Malarkey (aka Jerry Meadows) hauled his old player piano out onto the Market Plaza and encouraged the after-parade crowd to sing along to the rhythm of the chugging gas and steam engines displayed there.

Meadows created the medicine show denizen after studying such medical-show-business phenomena a decade ago. After a few hesitant attempts, the character emerged into a full-blown street character who seldom misses an event in the block. Jerry's manufactured southern twang and accent help to transform his 'real self' into a most believable character who might very well have sold snake oil from these very storefronts a century ago. "Hiya, Perfesser!"

The 1990 Frog Island Festival Schedule

Friday, June 22

- 4 pm Gates open
- 5 pm Percy Gabriel's
New Orleans Jazz Band
w/ Morris Lawrence (2 sets)
- 7 pm Johnny Adams and the
Sun Messengers
- 8:45 pm
Nathan and the
Zydeco Cha Chas
- 10 pm Wayne Touns & Zydecajun



Saturday, June 23

- 11 am Gates open
- Noon Taslimah's Ragtime Band
- 1 pm Phil Lasley
& David 'Fathead' Newman
and Marcus Belgrave, with the
New Breed Bebop Society
- 5 pm The Frank Morgan Quartet
- 7 pm Mr. B
- 8 pm Marcia Ball
- 10 pm A Chicago Blues Party:
A.C. Reed, Jimmy Dawkins
& Phil Guy with
The Professor's Blues Review

Sunday, June 24

- 11 am Gates open
- Noon The Second Ebenezer
Baptist Youth Choral
- 1 pm Jay Caldwell
& The Gospel Ambassadors
- 2:30 pm Francisco Mora's
New World Jazz Ensemble,
featuring Marcus Belgrave
- 4:30 pm
Trinidad Tripoli
Steel Band
- 6 pm Mahlathini and the
Mahotella Queens
- 8 pm Sun Ra & The Arkestra



Frog Island Festival announces complete lineup

The Ark is proud to announce the lineup of the 1990 Frog Island Festival. The Festival adds another full day of music this year and, spurred by last year's record attendance, will significantly improve the staging of the event to assure all patrons a good view of the show. Frog Island '90 happens under a big, airy tent by the Huron River in Ypsilanti's Depot Town on Friday, Saturday and Sunday, June 22, 23, and 24. Showtimes are 5 pm Friday and noon on Saturday and Sunday. The gates open one hour before showtime each day.

Seventeen bands will present blues, jazz, zydeco, Caribbean music and — new to the Festival this year — gospel, rhythm and blues, ragtime and African music. Unique in this part of the country, the Frog Island Festival will feature international stars and Detroit's finest artists in a show of uncommon color and scope.

Major headliners include Sun Ra and the Arkestra; the Michigan debut of the classic Frank Morgan Quartet; a Chicago Blues Party with A.C. Reed, Jimmy Dawkins, Phil Guy and the Professor's Blues Revue; Wayne Toups and Zydecajun and the Michigan debut of Mahlatini and the Mahotella Queens, a 10 piece band from Soweto, South Africa, visiting the United States for the first time.

There are a number of other significant "firsts": a collaboration between New Orleans' classiest soul singer, Johnny Adams, and Detroit's Sun Messengers; a reunion between former Ray Charles bandmates David 'Fathead' Newman and Marcus Belgrave, backed by the New Breed Bebop Society big band; the Michigan debut of Nathan and the Zydeco Cha Chas; the area debut of Jay Caldwell and the Gospel Ambassadors and the pairing of two former New Orleanians — clarinetist and award-winning Washtenaw Community College jazz director Dr. Morris Lawrence appearing as special guest with Percy Gabriel's New Orleans Jazz Band.

Returning after last year's Festival-stealing performance will be the piano pounding, wailing Texas fury — Marcia Ball and her band. Also back again are Festival favorites Mr. B., a boogie woogie and blues piano man, Tripoli Steel Band, who specialize in calypso, reggae, ska and other sunny Caribbean music.

The Festival will again present the best of Detroit's world-class jazz community.

Taslimah's Ragtime Band, led by pianist Taslimah Bey, features the ragtime music of Scott Joplin and other early masters. Saxophonist Phil Lasley leads his own quintet, aptly named Fire, offering incendiary Motor City bebop and beyond. The New Breed band, led by Teddy Harris, is a spunky combination of Detroit veterans and the city's best new young players. Francisco Mora's 11-piece New World Jazz Ensemble interprets his original, Latin-rooted music in an expansive, post-modern style. This group's performance, underwritten by the New Initiatives for the Arts program, will recreate a performance of Mora's *Suite for the Americas*, which captivated the 1989 Montreux Detroit festival crowd last September.

The Festival's first presentation of traditional gospel music offers something special. Opening for the Gospel Ambassadors — who've been performing and touring for 28 years — will be the group that won the Detroit Gospel Fest competition, a notable accomplishment in a city widely regarded as a world center of gospel music: The Second Ebenezer Baptist Youth Chorale, 50 voices strong.

With plenty of room for blankets, lawnchairs, children (who are welcomed free of charge if 12 or under) and picnic baskets, the park's rustic riverside setting lends the Festival the air of a giant neighborhood picnic accompanied by some of the world's best music. There will be a cash bar, non-alcoholic beverages and four food booths offering All-American, soul, Louisiana and vegetarian cuisine.

Tickets went on sale Monday, May 14 around the state and in many Depot Town businesses.

Mail orders: Check or money order to "The Ark — Frog Island"
637 1/2 South Main Street

Ann Arbor, Michigan, 48104 with SASE.
Group discount: Purchase ten tickets by MAIL ONLY from any one category and receive two more tickets free of charge.

Phone Orders: (313)763/TKTS

Prices:

Friday: \$9.50 advance, \$12 door;

Saturday or Sunday: \$11.50 advance,
\$14 door.

Three Day Pass: \$25 advance, \$35 door.

Follow the green balloons through Depot Town for these Festival specials!

Saturday: Farm Fresh Foods,
Community Exhibits, Craft shows!
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Ypsilanti Farmers' Market

Free green crystal
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Single dips - Choc Chip Mint .84
Lily Pad Sundae
(A flakey cream puff split in half
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covered in hot fudge. . . \$1.99)
Quarts of Lime Sherbet \$2.75

Check out our Special Frog Island menu
The Occasion Station

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J.R. Trading Post

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1990 Frog Island Festival
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your grandmother threw away!
Depot Exchange Antiques

The Depot Town Study spoofed 15 years later

Sociological implications of hysterical preservation

Just about everybody who comes down to Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town for an ice cream cone or a beer likes to tell about what they can remember about the 'old days' in the district, back before most of the buildings had historical markers on them. But not many of them really know what happened to make the turnaround. Or, if they know, they aren't telling. Here's the whole truth — from a paper presented to the Eastern Michigan University Department of Antiquities and Old Stuff at the end of the spring semester.

- As late as 1974, the tourists' guide book published by the (then) Greater Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce had the map's legend placed over the corner of Cross and River Streets. Apparently no one who visited in the late sixties or seventies was too interested in finding the God's Children Motorcycle Club or a good railroad bar that opened at 7 am.

- New owners of Depot Town tenements commenced to hang out at the local paint stores, reading the names of the colors used at Colonial Williamsburg. Flaunting a possible sale, the store clerks advised the use of deodorant first. Early television commercials had just informed Americans that they smelled bad, but there were few TV sets in Ypsilanti's old railroad district. With proper application, a few squirts of *Stopette* were more effective than gallons of latex paint.

- There was no pot of gold at the end of the early rainbows. Most every new 'boutique' in the block in the seventies was named for some part of the spectrum found in 'Rainbows.' T-shirts, jewelry and bump shops sported Rainbow names recalling their initial meetings with realtors at Woodstock the previous summer.

- The Huron River drew new settlers to its shores long before the Recycling Center appeared. Most building remodelers found each other as they were dumping asphalt shingles or weed killer into the swift current to be carried downstream to Belleville. Just about all of those participants have completely reformed and are now sorting grass clippings from cat hair before leaving their apartments each day.

Ypsilanti's hysterical railroad district keeps showing up in the footnotes of perversionists' texts, but the laughs are still found in the neighborhood.

New locust trees line East Cross Street

After a year of hassles with City Hall, Standard Printing's Carol Hansen finally managed to get the five above-ground planters in the block filled with new shopping-center-style locusts. Three of the maples that were planted ten years ago had succumbed to the lack of surface water afforded by the raised 'bunkers,' while two just managed to survive through constant attention from neighbors.

The City's Department of Public Works pulled out the dead and dying maples in early May and managed to transplant one of them in the Market Plaza where it may pull through the shock with much care and water during the next season.

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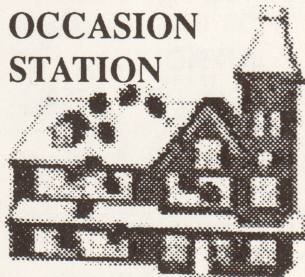
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Page 3
DTA,
June 1990

The Depot Town Association, Inc., 17 May 1990

The editor took minutes in the absence of the secretary.

Correspondence - State Representative Kirk Profit and UM Bentley Historical Library (see items in this issue).

April minutes were approved as published.

Treasury current balance = \$4302.93.

Budget & Events

Frog Island Festival agreement with The Ark is still pending. Frog Island flyer is out. 12 merchants responded to ads for the event. Name ownership (DBA papers) are ready for final disposition with WEMU's Art Timko.

Other business

A motion was made for the Association to pay for expenses for trees planted on City property in the past year (approximately \$1500) - but died for lack of second. Several proxies were on hand, but the matter remains unresolved.

The Rag has nominated the Michigan Artrain for the Governor's Award as an Outstanding Arts Organization, citing its many successes in Depot Town.

The Neighborhood Associations of Michigan (NAM) will hold a conference in Flint on June 15 - 16. Jerry Meadows or others may attend.

NIFTY

(New Initiative for Tourism In Ypsilanti: Quo Vadis? Where goes the district without a master plan? Discussion followed about the

viability of the Downtown Development Authority and its recent set-backs with City Council. Chairman Feters is hopeful and continues to be active, viable and optimistic.

The Michigan Travel Bureau solicits slides and photos of local events for use in its many promotions ("I Am Michigan"). Current files are being retired to the Michigan History Museum and recent scenes of events in Depot Town are encouraged. Send to: Michigan Travel Bureau, P.O. Box 30226, Lansing, MI 48909.

DDA

Chairman Feters has met with Milt Firestone, Michigan's Assistant Attorney General for Municipal Affairs as well as a professional consulting

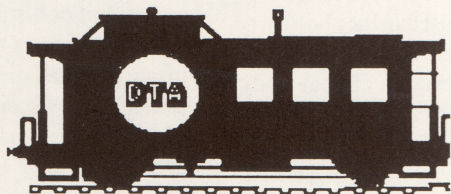
firm regarding creation of a Master Plan. Next DDA meeting is Thursday, June 14 (Flag Day!).

The Depot Town **Antique Engine Club** will present its annual Tail Gate Swap Meet after the Memorial Day Parade in the Market Plaza.

Judi Monaghan will propose a district-wide promotional give-away for Heritage Festival at the next meeting. Catalogs were made available for study.

Best Yet Award to Jerry Tillman and Brenda Knox for the production of last month's highly successful fashion show.

The Golden Goose Award to the weatherman who can't seem to make up his mind about winter/spring/summer. Adjourned at 9:00 pm.



RAIL MAIL

To the editor:

Just a short note to thank you for your kindness in loaning me the copy of Olmsted's 1913 study of Ypsilanti. I found it very interesting and I appreciate your allowing me the opportunity to read it.

Best personal regards.

Sincerely,

Kirk A. Profit, State Representative
22nd District

To the editor:

I certainly appreciate you delivering the back issues of Depot Town Rag. I'm sorry we did not meet.

Your publication will be an interesting addition to our archives. We are especially interested in the remembrances and histories of your area.

We are a research library open to the public. Your periodical should be of interest to local historians.

Thanks very much to the Association.
Carol S. Pintek, , Bentley Historical Library

Membership tear-off:

- ✓ Regular voting membership (for property and business owners) = \$25 per year.
- ✓ Associate membership (monthly mailing of The Rag) = \$10 per year.
- ✓ Patron membership = \$100 for life.

Send your check to DTA,
c/o The Old Caboose
400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, MI 48198

June 1990

Depot Towners are invited to participate in any or all of the following activities for the good of this old commercial district:

Development Authority (DDA)

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 6/14

Freighthouse Coffeeshop

Association

7:30 p.m. Thursday, 6/21

The Old Caboose

Antique Engine Club

7:00 p.m. Thursday, 6/28

Freighthouse Coffeeshop



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THE DEPOT TOWN RAG

A publication of the Depot Town Association, Inc. a nonprofit, tax-exempt corporation dedicated to preserving the unique character of the neighborhood and to the enhancement of its business climate.

-Tom Dodd, editor

Depot Town Association, Inc.

Paul Feters, president

c/o The Old Caboose

400 Market Place

Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Active Memberships:

- Ypsilanti Chamber of Commerce
- Washtenaw Council for the Arts
- Neighborhood Associations of Michigan
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[Fast hustles and quick deals seem to be endemic to the neighborhood. Joe Thompson's final installment of memoirs tells of such scams in Depot Town's long and rich history.]

The Follett House scam

I've been told by two interesting people of those days about a couple of sales that were made at the Depot. One was when Denny Doyle sold the Follett House. It seems that business had fallen off quite a lot. Denny wanted to sell the place so he heard about a fellow by the name of Mathias who was looking for a tavern so he invited him to Ypsilanti to take a look at the Follett House. Denny was a little bit unscrupulous in his business actions but he got a group of fellows to go to Ann Arbor with suitcases and another group to go down to Wayne and when the Michigan Central train came in, these fellows flocked into the Follett House to register and stay over night. Mathias was sitting in the lobby and he looked over the crowd and just then the train came in from the other way and these fellows he had sent to Wayne came in. Well, the bar was doing business and the barber shop was doing business and Mathias was mesmerized by the amount of business he anticipated so he bought the place and didn't they sell him another place up in the Thompson Buiding for an overflow of his patrons. Well, he paid his mooney and he owned the hotel and Doyle was gone.

High-tech, low voltage in Millworks Building

Have you noticed all those post lights appearing in the front yards of Ypsilanti homes? The company responsible for the security and convenience provided by these lights has a new name and address. *The Lighting Company* is now located at 306-A North River Street, across from Ted's Auto Electric, and can be reached at 487-5100. "Our three-year-old business has been lighting up Ypsilanti with low voltage post lights, the same type that is supported by Detroit Edison," says owner,

Joe Thompson remembers: Four closing anecdotes; scams, smokes, stamps & streetcars

Liberty up in smoke

Another incident that happened that had a little humor to it was when they had the fiftieth anniversary and the celebration was held at the Depot. They had an arch over the road that was made of lattice and up on the top of the arch they had a figure of the Goddess of Liberty, which was a mannikin bust that they borrowed from some milliner. Well, they had a speaker - I don't know, a congressman or somebody, come here to make the speech for the fiftieth anniversary. They had this bust up on top of the arch with a shroud over it and at a critical time in his speech they were to pull the rope and that would take the shroud off the bust. But, in the night some wag crawled up on there and with his jack knife cut a hole in the mouth of the Goddess of Liberty and inserted about a 7-inch cigar so at the critical moment they pulled off the shroud and there was the Goddess of Liberty, instead of looking fresh and sweet as she should, she had this great big cigar in her mouth and it brought down the house. Well, so much for that.

Paul Siebert.

The company's lighting is 'down-to-dusk' guaranteed for five years, and use only a dollar's worth of electricity a month. The Lighting Company is also a full service electrical contractor, providing for residential and commercial needs. Security lighting is growing rapidly, as well as the demand for quality electrical contracting, and The Lighting Company will be opening more office to meet future needs.

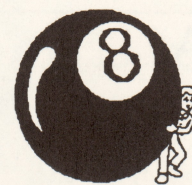
World trader made his stamp

There was quite an interesting thing that happened at the Depot. Mr. Shelly B. Hutchinson had a shoe store there at one time and in visiting a friend of his over in Jackson he noticed that he had a sales gimmick where he gave each customer a coupon and on Saturday night they would have a drawing and somebody would get a nice piece of jewelry. Well, that started Mr. Hutchinson thinking about trading stamps and he developed the whole thing in the Depot section of Ypsilanti. And that is the Hutchinson of the S & H Trading Stamps. He built a beautiful home on River Street that stills stands, which is kind of a monument of his great success in the trading stamp business. Other things that Mr. Hutchinson got into didn't pan out so well. He started a newspaper in Detroit called *The United States Daily* that failed and he started a cereal factory something like the Battle Creek cereal over at the Depot and that didn't do too well.

Intra-town street car

Did you know a horse-drawn street car operated between Depot Town and UP Town? It was driven by Ruben Cole and went on Cross Street to Washington and then south to Harriet Street. I recall my mother placing me on a seat with a quantity of sewing material and patterns, and Mrs. Frank Skhowerman removing me, at her home on South Washington Street. They never turned the car around, simply changed the horse to the other end.

Well, I hope I haven't made too many mistakes in this little discourse and I hope some of you people find it interesting about the early days of Depot Town



Jonesy retains national Nine-ball championship

When Sandee and Bill French opened their new second floor pool parlor last month, they contracted for nationally known Ewa Mataya to kick off the event with two performances of her billiard prowess and take on all challengers. After humiliating every taker, loyal fans in the crowd coached eighty-six-year-old Depot Towner, Harold Jones, to face the attractive star. In a game of Nine Ball, Jonesy skunked her — maintaining a title he has held for more than fifty years.

Jonesy's record still stands — and may rest unchallenged. The neighborhood continues to echo praises for our oldest and most accomplished member.

Page 5 DTA, June 1990



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Evenings by appt.

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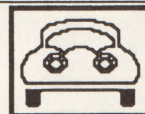


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